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House Panel Approves Bills Relaxing Ban on Chanceries

By Elsie Carper

Washington Post Staff Writer

A House District subcommittee approved legislation yesterday that would remove the ban against the construction of foreign government office buildings in selected residential areas of the city.

Four separate bills were approved that would have the effect of designating certain individual properties for chancery use and opening up large tracts of land for chancery locations.

A subcommittee spokesman said the legislation would provide sufficient sites for chanceries and obviate the need for the chancery enclave sought by the State Department in the area north of Washington Circle.

Locations proposed in the four bills would not require the relocation of any business nor would they take away anyone's home, the spokesman said.

The subcommittee followed the unusual procedure of approving a bill that had not yet been introduced and on which no hearings had been held.

Five Big Tracts

The measure would establish five major tracts of land totaling 6 acres for chancery use.

City zoning ordinances would be bypassed in permitting chanceries on three of the properties. They are the 21-acre Tregaron Estate at 3029 Klinglerd, nw., the 18-acre estate now owned and occupied as an embassy by the Republic of China at 3225 Woodley rd. nw., and the Whitehaven triangle, situated between Massachusetts Avenue, Whitehaven Street and Observatory Circle. A number of chanceries including that of Great Britain already are located in the triangle.

The other two properties listed in the bill are the 13-acre Mount Alto tract, where the Soviet Union will locate its new embassy-chancery complex and the 16-acre Wolman tract on upper Massachusetts Avenue near Ward Circle, which already has been conditionally zoned for chanceries. The bill would have the effect of removing control over the location and size of the office building to be constructed on the properties.

The second bill approved by the subcommittee would permit six countries that own property now zoned residential to construct office buildings on the sites. The countries are New Zealand, Greece, India, Turkey, Mexico and France.

The property owned by France is at 2535 Belmont rd. nw. The announcement by the French that they plan to build on the property led to the enactment of legislation in 1964 precluding chanceries from residential areas. Sen. J. Wil-

liam Fulbright (D-Ark.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, lives nearby and was instrumental in passage of the legislation.

The third bill, introduced by Rep. William H. Ayres (D-Ohio), would permit Jeane L. Dixon, Washington's seeress and real estate executive, to rent for chancery purposes a house she purchased in 1962 at 2344 Massachusetts ave. nw. Mrs. Dixon remodeled the property for occupancy by Libya but she was unable to get it rezoned.

3 Houses Cited

The fourth bill would permit three houses formerly used as chanceries but vacant at the time the 1964 law was passed to continue to be used as chanceries. One of the prop-

erties, owned by the in-laws of former Rep. Howard W. Smith (D-Va.), is now occupied by Niger. Permission for Niger to occupy the property was granted by the Zoning Commission. The bill would make it certain that such use was legal. The subcommittee spokesman could not identify the other two properties.

Earlier this year the House approved a bill setting aside two tracts in the Adams-Morgan area for chanceries. They are the Shapiro property, on Calvert Street and Adams Mill Road and the Henderson tract, on 16th Street north of Florida Avenue. The Senate has not acted on this bill.